

Winter Fun in California State Parks

Winter is a great time to visit California State Parks. Whether it's downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or just fun in the snow, State Parks offer winter recreation for everyone.

SKIING

Southern California

Mount San Jacinto State Park, reached via Highway 243 to Idyllwild or by the Aerial Tramway from Palm Springs, features cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding and snow play. Idyllwild has businesses catering to winter activities and, at the top of the Aerial Tramway, there is a Ski Center dedicated to winter sports activities. For information on the Tram and Ski Center, call (760) 325-1449. For more information, contact the park at (909) 659-2607 or (760) 767-5311.

Northern California

Burton Creek State Park has approximately 36 miles of cross-country ski area. The park is located about two miles east of Tahoe City. The ski season runs from Thanksgiving through April, as snow conditions permit. For more information, contact the park at (530) 525-7982 or 525-7232, or contact "Tahoe Cross Country" at (530) 583-5475.

Calaveras Big Trees State Park, four miles east of Arnold and Highway 4, offers snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Located within 30 minutes of the park, and within the Stanislaus National Forest, are opportunities for general snow play, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and downhill skiing at the Bear Valley Ski Resort. For more information, contact the park at (209) 795-2334.

Donner Memorial State Park, located west of Truckee off I-80, also features cross-country skiing opportunities. For more information, contact the park at (530) 582-7892 or 525-7232.

Grover Hot Springs State Park, south of Lake Tahoe, three miles west of Markleeville on Hot Springs Road, not only offers cross-country skiing, but also a 102-degree mineral springwater pool for after-ski relaxation. For more information, call the park at (530) 694-2248 or 525-7232.

Lake Valley State Recreation Area, near Lake Tahoe, is a snowmobile and cross-country ski areas during winter. For more information, call the park at (530) 525-7232 or "Mountain Lake Adventures" at (530) 546-4280.

Plumas-Eureka State Park, five miles west of Blairsden on County Road A-14, features cross-country and downhill skiing, plus the Plumas-Eureka Ski Bowl. The park has one designated ski trail and unlimited outlying areas that can be explored by advanced skiers.

At the Ski Bowl, beginner to advanced runs are reached via the Squaw Poma (650' vertical), Rainbow Poma (350' vertical), or the bynn hill rope tow (50' vertical). The majority of the runs are intermediate in difficulty. The Ski Bowl is operated by a non-profit organization as a concession. Days of operation include weekends, Wednesdays and holidays - weather and snow conditions permitting. For more information on the operation or current fees, contact the Ski Bowl at (916) 836-2317.

The phone number for the park is (530) 836-2380.

Sugar Pine Point State Park features groomed trails for cross-country skiing, as well as snowshoe interpretive programs. The park is located on the west shore of Lake Tahoe, ten miles south of Tahoe City on Highway 89.

Winter visitors to the park will find over 20 kilometers of marked cross-country ski trails - and a heated restroom in the General Creek campground. The campground is open year-round, with first come, first served from September 4th through June 14th. Interpretive presentations on a variety of winter-related subjects are presented most weekends from January through March.

It's always a good idea to call the park for current conditions. Phone (530) 525-7982 or 525-7232.

SNOW FUN IN SNO-PARKS

Sno-Parks are snow-cleared parking lots, with sanitation facilities, that provide direct access to popular cross-country ski trails, snowmobile routes, and snow play areas. The program is administered by California State Parks' Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division.

For more information, call the **SNO-PARK HOTLINE at (916) 324-1222**. A day permit is valid at any Sno-Park, but only for a single day. A season permit is valid at any Sno-Park on any day in the winter season (November 1 through May 30). A day or season permit is required for each vehicle parked at a Sno-Park site. Permits are available at businesses near Sno-Parks, visitor information centers, and metropolitan-area winter recreation stores. Sno-Park Permit sales fund Sno-Park operations such as snow removal, sanitation, and signing.

The permit must be displayed on the left side of the vehicle dashboard where it can be seen clearly from the outside. Permits are non-refundable. Day permits are not transferable. Any vehicle parked at a Sno-Park without a permit properly displayed is subject to a fine.

Parking is on a first-come, first-served basis at all Sno-Parks, with no guarantee of a space. Visitors are asked to please park carefully in only one space, leaving room for other visitors. Visitors can usually avoid overcrowding by visiting on weekdays rather than weekends.

Overnight parking, including in-vehicle camping, is allowed at Sno-parks, except in certain situations. It's always a good idea to call ahead to the local U.S. Forest Service ranger station to check on conditions. Tent camping or other sleeping arrangements outside a vehicle in the parking area is prohibited at all Sno-Parks.

Trash receptacles are not provided at most Sno-Parks, so visitors are asked to please bring litter bags, and take refuse home for disposal.

Sno-Park locations include:

Alpine County: Hope Valley (Highway 88), Carson Pass (Highway 88), Lake Alpine (Highway 4), Meiss Meadow (Highway 88)

Calaveras County: Spicer (Highway 4)

El Dorado County: Echo Lake (Highway 50), Echo Summit (Highway 50), Iron Mountain (Highway 88), Taylor Creek (Highway 89)

Fresno County: Balsam Meadows, Coyote, Eastwood, Huntington Lake, Tamarack (all Highway 168)

Mono County: Rock Creek (Highway 395)

Nevada County: Donner Lake, Donner Summit, Yuba Gap (I-80)

Placer County: Blackwood Canyon (Highway 89)

Sierra County: Yuba Pass (Highway 49)

Stanislaus County: Highway 108 (at winter closure gate)

CAMPING

Southern California

Mount San Jacinto State Park is open year-round. Roads are plowed as necessary during the winter months. Developed camping (with showers) is available at the Idyllwild campground and more rustic camping (no showers, vault toilets) is available at the Stone Creek campground. Four hike-in camping areas are also available in the wilderness. Round Valley is the most easily reached, located 2.1 miles in by trail from the top of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. For campground reservations call ReserveAmerica at 800-444-7275. For more information, call the park at (909) 659-2607 or (760) 767-5311.

Snow camping, on a first-come, first-served basis, is also available at **Palomar Mountain State Park** [phone (760) 742-3462 or 765-0755] and **Cuyamaca Rancho State Park** [phone (760) 765-0755, press #8].

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park also has cabins. For more information, call (760) 765-0755.

Northern California

Calaveras Big Trees State Park, four miles east of Arnold on Highway 4, has 20 campsites available during winter. Campsites each include a table, fire-ring, and food locker. Restrooms with hot showers are available. The park also offers opportunities for hiking and picnicking among the Giant Sequoia redwood trees. For more information, contact the park at (209) 795-2334.

Castle Crags State Park, six miles south of Dunsmuir, has winter camping on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, call the park at (530) 235-2684.

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park, northeast of Redding near the town of Burney, has winter camping on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, call the park at (530) 335-2777 or 225-2065.

Sugar Pine Point State Park, the largest of the Tahoe-area state parks, has a campground that is open year-round. The campground is first come, first served from September 4th through June 14th. It is not on the reservation system.

WINTER CAMPING TIPS

Campers in state parks where winter weather may be a concern should be prepared. Here's a sample of things to consider before leaving on a winter campout:

- pack proper winter clothing and gear
- bring a supply of water and a food cache
- bring tire chains

- check anti-freeze level in your engine
- bring a shovel

WINTER HIKING TIPS

- check the weather forecast
- know when to turn around if weather or terrain becomes unsafe
- always leave a planned itinerary (and stick to it) with a friend or family member
- carry the proper equipment (including a first aid kit, map, compass, and whistle)
- wear appropriate footwear and clothing (dress in layers)

If visitors have any questions about camping at state parks, they should consult the rangers on duty for more information.

For more information about California State Parks, visit the website online at www.parks.ca.gov.

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